

SPEECH OF SAMUEL WEBB,

IN THE

NATIONAL ANTI-SLAVERY CONVENTION

HELD AT

ALBANY, N. Y.

ON THE FIRST DAY OF AUGUST,

1839.

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AUGUST 1st, 1839.

The Business Committee having reported the following resolutions—

“1. *Resolved*, That we will neither vote for, nor support the election of any man for President, or Vice President of the United States, or for Governor or Lieutenant Governor, or for any legislative office, who is not in favor of the immediate ABOLITION OF SLAVERY.

“2. *Resolved*, That every abolitionist who has a right to vote, be earnestly entreated to lose no opportunity to carry his abolition principles to the polls, and thereby cause our petitions to be heard through the medium of the ballot-box.

“3. *Whereas*, The subject of nominating distinct anti-slavery candidates for offices in the gift of the people, has been presented to this Convention,—Therefore,

“*Resolved*, That it be recommended to abolitionists to adopt such course in their respective sections of country, in regard to this matter, as will, in their judgment, best subserve the cause of immediate abolition.”

Samuel Webb, Chairman of said Committee, addressed the Convention as follows :

Allow me to embrace this opportunity to state some of the reasons which have *induced me*, and which I hope will incline *you* to vote for these resolutions.

Upon the result of your deliberations rest the hopes and the fears of

“Our countrymen in chains.”

There was a time when the virtuous and the good freely and *fearlessly* exercised their right to think,—to write,—to print,—to publish,—to speak, and *to act*, in behalf of suffering humanity—When such men as Lay, Benezet, Franklin, and Lafayette, dared to plead for the rights of colored Americans.

Now, so far from being able to plead successfully for *them*, we have occasion to speak of and for *ourselves*—our own rights have been assailed! It is no longer a question of slavery for the black man, but of liberty for the white man! Our respectful petitions to our representatives in our national legislature, have been contemptuously thrown upon the table—our constitutional right of enjoying freedom in each and in every State of this Union has been denied—a Senator in Congress has publicly and tauntingly threatened us with death if we dare come to the South, and our own Senators tamely heard the insulting threat, without daring to repel that audacious menace. Shall we *silently* submit to such indignities? No!

“If we have whispered truth, whisper no longer!—

Speak as the tempest does, *stern* and *stronger*!”

Let us no longer prostrate ourselves before the South in the humble and despised attitude of petitioners, but arising in the native majesty of freemen, let us say to the haughty southron :

“Thus far shalt thou go, but no farther.”

Let us avail ourselves of the power which belongs to us as American citizens—and by a proper, firm, independent, and unanimous use

of the elective franchise, make them hear us through the ballot-box, wherein

“ We have a weapon sinner set,
And better than the bayonet.—
A weapon that comes down as still
As snow-flakes fall upon the sod,
But executes a freeman’s will
As lightning does the will of God.”

We must concentrate our strength. Few parties have commenced under more favorable circumstances. Few have had such an array of *numbers* and of *talent* as we can command if we *unite together*, and pursue one *uniform* system of operations; if we organize *now* we may soon be able to send large majorities into the legislatures of all the free states, and even into “the legislature for the District of Columbia,” and by the year 1844 will be able to elect a President.

Advocating liberty and equality of legal rights, (irrespective of wealth or poverty, occupation or color,) we will be the only truly “*democratic party*,” and will be the acknowledged friends of the laborers, the working men, the mechanics and the farmers.

Slavery and democracy are antagonist principles, and those who in *sincerity* hold to the one, must of necessity reject the other: to pretend to be in favor of *both*, is like blowing hot and cold at the same instant.

The “leading politicians” of the South, and the *following* politicians at the North, appear to have adopted the maxim that “*those who think ought to govern those who work*,” and the slaveholder boldly tells *his* laborers they “*have no RIGHT to think*,” and his apologist at the North is of the *same mind* in relation to the *northern* laborers, only he *dares not tell them so*! No!—the hard-handed, but *honest-hearted* working-men of the North are beginning to *THINK for themselves*, and already they *feel* that they are capable of *self-government*;—they will not much longer be led by a few designing, speculating, trading politicians, whose only care is to get the largest possible share of “the spoils” of public office *for themselves*, and to give *as little as possible* to the *laboring part* of the community.

The time has come when this nation *must be divided*, not by geographical, but by *moral* land-marks.

A new division of parties must take place! The friends of freedom must either *organize* and assert their rights, or else *withdraw* from the contest, and leave the slaveholders and their slaves to settle the question of liberty between themselves as they best can. *Our present false position* must be *abandoned*, if we wish to aid in abolishing slavery.

The political parties of the present day, like Nebuchadnezzar’s image, are composed of gold and silver—brass, (in abundance,) iron—and last, if not least, of *Clay*! and like that image, they shall fall, never more to arise. Then shall their iron despotism, their clay sophistry, their brazen impudence, their silver and gold, their “bribery

and corruption," be broken to pieces, and become like the chaff of the summer threshing-floors, and the wind shall carry them away, that no place be found for them, and the stone which was cut out of the mountain without hands, even the *truth*, which we advocate, shall become a great mountain, and fill the whole earth.

A struggle for liberty is about to take place in this country. The people *will* take sides—the present political parties will be succeeded by *TWO great parties*, which, like Aaron's rod, will swallow up all the rest—namely, *the friends of liberty*, and *the advocates of slavery*, between whom the distinction will be so plain, that each individual will know (and others will know) on which side he is:—there will be *no neutrals*! every individual will belong either to the free party or to the slaveholding party,—“men of principle in proportion to their interest,”—“northern men with southern feelings,”—those of but one principle, “and that *all INTEREST*”—men of *no principle* at all—“men of but *one idea*,” and that, “the idea of the exaltation of *self*”—and those of no definite ideas of *any thing*, (except of loaves and fishes,) will all *have to take sides*—they can no longer continue “*non-committal*”—“he that is not against us, is for us.”—Liberty or slavery! will be the watch-word during the canvass, and the reward or the punishment attendant upon success or defeat. Neither you, nor I, nor all of us can prevent this state of things from occurring. We might as well undertake to dam the Hudson with a sheaf of straw, as to try to stop the current of events which are about to transpire. Our enemies,—the *enemies of liberty*, and consequently the enemies of our country,—*will drive us into it*: no sacrifice which *we* can make will avert the approaching storm:—so, *meet it we must*, in open, manly, honorable, peaceable, and constitutional resistance; or in mean, tame, cowardly submission. Such is the present condition of things, that *slavery cannot much longer exist in this country*.

Are we, the proud United States of America, more powerful than Great Britain in her high estate, when the 3d George reigned over an empire on which the sun never set, and of which this young and haughty nation then formed an integral, but unimportant part?

England, (which before and *since*, has held her own against the world,) with all her *mighty power*, could not hold in bondage *three millions* of people *DETERMINED to be FREE*! Bonaparte with all the power of France, sufficient to enable him to shake the thrones of Europe, was unable to conquer the handful of liberated slaves in St. Domingo! And shall *we*, the people of the United States, with (comparatively speaking) the weakest civilized government on earth,—shall *we* attempt to imitate their folly, and, like them, *fail* in that unholy undertaking? Shall *we*, with our extended territory of more than a thousand millions of acres of arable land, contained in 2,257,000 square miles, (or a little more than 1-20th part of the land surface of the earth,) with our 2,900 miles of sea-board along the Atlantic Ocean, and the Gulf of Mexico, 500 miles along the Pacific Ocean, and 5,900 miles inland boundaries, making altogether 9,300 miles of sea coast and frontier boundaries, (nearly all of which are at present defenceless,)—with our mighty rivers, of hundreds and thousands of miles in

length, intersecting the whole breadth of our country;—with our almost inaccessible mountains and interminable forests, affording shelter if not sustenance to the enemy—exposed on the East and South to attacks from the ocean, on the North to collisions with *one* if not *two* of the most powerful nations of Europe, and on the West to inroads from desperate savages, rendered so by our own treachery and injustice,—with every *fifth* man, woman, and child in the nation, turned into natural enemies by our merciless cruelty and oppression, and ready, on the first suitable occasion, to seize upon their lost rights, even (if need be) by the extinguishment of *ours*—Shall we have the Heaven-daring presumption to undertake to do what no other nation, however powerful, has ever yet been able to accomplish? To keep three millions of men in perpetual personal bondage is impossible. Such attempts have always failed, and can never be successful.

“Never! I tell thee, Carolina, *never!*”

That national sins produce national punishments, is as consistent with right and reason as with revelation. Think not, because the slaves have borne and forborne, that they will bear for ever—Go! trust the slumbering volcano!—sleep in the very centre of its crater, rather than trust to the treacherous submission of *three millions of slaves!* It is the deceitful apparent calm in the centre of a storm.

The slaves have been lulled into quietude by the expectation that *the friends of freedom* at the North could and would prevail upon their masters at the South to give them up *freely*, to let them go *peaceably*—but let it once be known and understood by the slaves that *we* have done all we could—that we can do no more, and that relief *from us* is hopeless—then will desperation lead them to seek liberty in conquest or in DEATH.

To show that intelligent men at the South entertain similar views, I will request the Secretary to read an extract from a letter written by a native of *Virginia*, (late pastor of a congregation there,) and published at Lexington, *Kentucky*.

[The Secretary, *Joshua Leavitt*, then read the following extract from Letters on Slavery, by J. D. Paxton.]

“Such is the state of things at the South with regard to slavery, that whatever our wishes may be, I can see before us but three alternatives. Either we must free our slaves, and separate and colonize them abroad,—or free, and permit them to remain among us,—or, before long, have conflict with them, and finally leave them in possession of a large portion of the South.

“I well know that each of these alternatives will seem bitter as the wormwood and the gall to many; and in proportion to their aversion to them will be their unwillingness to admit that such is our condition. This, however, does not alter the case, nor the facts that go directly to prove it. We have above two millions of colored people now, [1833.] They increase in the South more rapidly than the whites.—We have often been alarmed with those now possessed, and serious perils have been narrowly escaped. What will it be with four or eight millions, which some of us may see, and sixteen, which many of our children may see? To suppose that such a state of things would not lead to conflict, is to suppose a thing so improbable, that it would be unwise to calculate on it. The products about which slave-labor is employed, would not support such a mass of people. *A change must of necessity take place in their relations to their owners.* But the love of freedom has ever led slaves to seek it by force. All history proves this. That such a spirit is now felt among

our slaves is past dispute. That it will increase with their increase and improvement, no one need doubt. *Freedom or conflict* is as certain as the march of time, and no common conflict will it be; all history proves that such conflicts assume the worst forms: of all conflicts, such ought, with most care and foresight, to be avoided. There is much reason to fear, that unless the great body of them are freed, or some great change made in their condition, within the next thirty or forty years, they will *contend*, and that *successfully*, for their freedom. Should their first efforts fail, still confidence and peace would be destroyed. Who could live in peace among them with the knowledge that he was on a volcano, that might, at any successive hour, burst and work his ruin!

"In such a state of things, it is the part of wisdom to yield to necessity; to let them have, *without contest*, what they assuredly will contend for, and sooner or later *succeed in getting*; and it would be well to let them have it, in a way that would make some amends for the past, and secure their good will for the time to come."

Mr. Webb continued:—

This is what some would call an "incendiary publication"—sent from the South to the North.

It shows how a freeman dared speak in a slave state when addressing slaveholders on the subject of slavery.

We have heard the vain boastings of some of the slaveholders at the South. They say that all they ask of us is to let them alone—that they are not *afraid* of their slaves. Neither is a drunkard afraid of the contents of his bottle, which all sober people know is working out his destruction. *The slaveholders are intoxicated with slavery* as completely as a drunkard is intoxicated with strong drink.

But if they *are not* afraid, then why did they allow themselves to be thrown into consternation and alarm, when the imbecile NAT TURNER, with an insignificant rabble at his heels, without any reasonable prospect of success—without concert of action—without internal resources, and without foreign aid, madly attempted to rebel? It shook "the ancient dominion" to its centre! Not *afraid* of their slaves? Then *why* attempt to prevent the discussion of their rights? Why sleep with loaded pistols under their pillows? Yes, they *are* afraid! disguise it as they may, they are afraid, and so are *we*, and so ought every reflecting man to be, who "trembles for his country when he remembers that God is just, and that his justice will not sleep for ever!"

In a subject of such vital importance to our country, without reference to the peculiar views, religious, moral, benevolent, or political, of any society to which any of us may belong, let us take that enlarged view of the subject which statesmen and patriots ought to take, who see men as *they are*, not as they *ought to be*, and who, taking things *as we find them*, and understanding human nature *as it is*, provide against the *future* from a knowledge of the *past*, and from an acquaintance with the human heart, foresee the probable course which large masses of men will pursue under probable circumstances.

In order to elucidate the subject, it will not be necessary to refer to accurate tables. Let us, therefore, assume the present population of the United States to be fifteen millions of free persons, and three millions of slaves, in which case the slaves equal one-fifth of the free population, to say nothing of free blacks, or of large numbers of injured, exasperated Indians within or near our territories; (a handful

of whom it would appear from the War in Florida, are almost an even match for the military prowess of this great nation.)

The three millions of slaves are probably held by less than three hundred thousand masters or *mis'tresses*!!! (as the case may be.) These slaveholders, therefore, are not more than one-sixtieth part of the entire, or one-fiftieth part of the free population.

These are serious considerations, when, uplifting the veil of futurity, we look towards coming events; among which are shadowed forth in bold relief, three direful calamities, namely: civil commotions, foreign invasion, and servile war! *one* of which, at least, without a special interposition of Providence, will probably take place, unless this nation shall repent of the evil of their ways, and by an act of justice toward their slaves, avert the doom which is hanging over us.

Perhaps it may be said we are unnecessarily *foreboding evil*—that the present political parties are not to be as ephemeral as has been supposed, or if they are, other combinations will be formed, and new divisions of the people take place, irrespective of the question of liberty or slavery? *So much the worse!* for IF SLAVERY BE NOT ABOLISHED, who dares to say that the time will *not* come, when our free white population, in the strife for office, in their mad career after ascendancy, will be divided into two highly excited, conflicting, antagonist parties, (which, when the increments of talent, wealth, and numbers are all taken into the account, will be nearly equally divided,) when such a crisis shall arrive, need I point out the power that will decide between us.

General Jackson's address to the colored people of Louisiana, both before and after the battle of New Orleans, shows too plainly where military chieftains would look to sustain themselves and their party under even less desperate circumstances. Who will then dictate the terms upon which this great augmentation of physical force shall be obtained? The blacks themselves, of course,—*not their masters*. No! the very overture will prove them to be their own masters, if not the masters of the whites; for where the strength of conflicting parties is nearly equal, whoever holds the balance of power between them, is, or can make himself or themselves the masters of both. History confirms this so fully as to need no further proof at this time; and who knows but that in the inscrutable wisdom of God, this may be the mode by which we may be punished for having exterminated one race of men, and stolen another race to supply their place; and that *these* may be raised in their turn, to mete unto us that measure which we have so unmercifully bestowed upon the helpless aborigines of this land.

Let *children* shut their eyes, or turn away their heads, when danger is near. *Men, Statesmen, and Patriots* should look it in the face.

I need not point out the germs of a foreign war—the day is not distant when the peculiar relation between us, and one or two of the most powerful nations of Europe, will call for more wisdom than at present governs this nation, to prove that my fears are groundless. Independent of those extraneous causes, there is that in the peculiar relation between the two classes alluded to, which will invite aggression from abroad. We are not ignorant that the crowned heads of Europe

feel no special favor toward our experiment of the capability of man for self-government; and, narrow as the feeling is, there are those among them who would rejoice at our downfall; besides which, in a contest between the slaves and their oppressors, the sympathies of nearly all the world, civilized and savage, would be on the side of the slave struggling for liberty.

If one of the European nations, to avenge a supposed injury—to draw off a portion of its belligerent and troublesome, if not *dangerous* subjects—to gain the applause due to those who relieve the oppressed—from cupidity—the desire to monopolize the trade—from ambition, or from any other or worse motive, should send a fleet with eight or ten thousand warriors, each with a promise of promotion, (if not with a commission in his pocket,) to take effect upon their arrival in America, and land this nucleus of an army at, or near Charleston, or some other southern port, offering security, “free trade,” and *speedy fortunes!* to the renegade whites, and liberty and land to the blacks; who can doubt but such an army, composed of the very elite of the military men of modern Europe, now out of employ, and ripe for any warlike adventure, trained under Bonaparte, Wellington, or Blucher, could by such promises, in a few weeks, seduce to their standard one hundred thousand able-bodied colored men, and with these march from New Orleans, or Augusta, to Philadelphia, or New York, ravaging the intervening country with fire and sword, and laying every city, town, and village along the sea-board under contribution, and thus make *us* pay the expenses of the war! England was deterred from doing this during the last war, only from a fear for their own islands: that check is now entirely removed.

Frederick II, King of Prussia, could take a raw recruit, who had never bestrode a horse, and in two weeks make him a first rate trooper—in that same time how much easier would it be to qualify such an individual for a foot soldier! Besides which, these soldiers, so trained and tutored by the most experienced captains of the day, would all be hardy, able-bodied men,—acclimated and inured to hunger and privations beyond the endurance of northern men. Such is the valor of the freemen of this nation, that in a good cause they could accomplish anything but impossibilities; but our Florida war has *proved* that it is impossible for them to compete with the hardy slaves, and the restless, ever-watchful Indians, who, accustomed to hunger, to nakedness, and privation from all the comforts, and many of the necessities of life—practically acquainted with the topography and geography of the country, would be an overmatch for *ten times their number from the North*, unaccustomed to the climate, and, above all, to the deprivations and sufferings that would attend them amid the miasmas of the low lands and swamps, (“the malaria” of America,) particularly when their cause is unjust before God, and cruel in the sight of men.

In this “wooden country,” with but few roads, and those narrow and bad—intercepted by forests, streams, and morasses, an army much exceeding one hundred thousand men could not operate to advantage. A much larger number would be in each other’s way, and

would require more to sustain them than they were worth, (in a military point of view,) particularly if the enemy were supported by a maritime nation, with sufficient naval force to insure them a supply of provisions, in case of necessity, and to prevent such a supply to us.

Three millions of people having every thing to *gain*, and little or *nothing to lose*, could as easily furnish one or two hundred thousand soldiers as fifteen millions could or *would*, who have much to lose, and little or *nothing to gain* by such an unholy conflict. And whenever the red thunderbolt of war is let loose in judgment over this guilty land, it will, in all probability, be accompanied, not only by servile, but by *civil war*.

Let us turn from this dreadful picture to one of a more mercenary character, yet not less *interesting to some* at the North, as well as to those who reside at the South.

The three millions of slaves, held by less than one-fiftieth part of the free population, are worth, in the market, about ten hundred millions of dollars!! (giving to each slaveholder an average estate, in slaves, of about \$3,333.)

If the slaves are worth that to their masters and mistresses, notwithstanding all the disadvantages and disabilities under which they labor, surely they would be worth *more to themselves*, were they *certain* of receiving and enjoying their earnings, and free to do the best they could for themselves and their own families, and no longer bound to labor for the support of the master or his family.

In that case, the *nett* proceeds, or clear profits, arising from their labor, would be double what it now is, and of course they would be worth double to themselves what they now are to their masters. As to what they *are worth to themselves*, even under present circumstances, ask runaway slaves! and those who have not runaway, but *who have purchased themselves*. Where is the human being, having the natural feelings of a man, a husband, or a father, who could measure by dollars and cents the value of liberty to himself, his wife, his child, or his parent? Therefore it is a very *low* estimate, to say the slaves are worth *no more to themselves* than to their *masters*. According to the opinion of *some* people, if the slaves are liberated, it will be a *loss* to the masters, *equal to their present value*; and we have seen that at all events it will be at least *that much gain* to the emancipated slaves; so that if the masters *are* to lose, and the slaves to gain that great sum, it will make two billions (or two thousand millions) of dollars; and shows the magnitude of the stake for which large masses of men are about to contend, peaceably if they can, forcibly if they must. The pecuniary value of the colored people to us, the free people of the North, whether they remain as slaves or as freeman, will depend upon which of the two classes can produce the staple articles of the South the *cheapest*—or in other words, whether voluntary or involuntary labor will raise the greater quantity of sugar, cotton, tobacco, &c., for a given expenditure or outlay? and also, whether *three hundred thousand masters* holding their laborers as slaves *without wages*, and almost without any choice on the part of the slaves, as to what or *how much*

they shall consume, will be as good customers for the articles *we* have to sell, as *three millions of free people at liberty to consume as much as their labor can pay for?*

The answer to both these questions must be in favor of voluntary laborers, *if the profits of their labor be secured to them.*

Free colored men could and would raise more produce, and, consequently, at a cheaper rate, than that produced by the forced labor of slaves. And as to the articles which *northern* men *produce*, the market would be increased almost ten-fold if the slaves were set free.

At present, the slaveholders have their houses furnished, their wardrobes supplied, their implements of labor, such as they are, *already provided*: but convert these slaves into three millions of freemen, and they will have *every thing to buy* as fast as the profits of their labor will enable them to purchase. Tools, household furniture, hats, boots, shoes, clothing of all kinds, the fabrics from our looms, the produce of our soil, bread stuffs, cattle, in short everything we could spare, would find a ready market among them.

Shall we then reject these customers for the sake of one-tenth the number, who are not only sufficiently supplied for the present, but many of whom, from their indolent habits, and more especially from the ruinous system of culture by slave labor, are, or soon will become insolvent; and who may find out "a new way to pay old debts," by crying "*abolition*" against that man who dares to venture among them and attempt to compel payment of his dues. Such an individual, whatever might have been his previous opinion of the "peculiar institution" of the South, might think himself happy to leave his debtors, and escape with his life, without a coat of tar and feathers.

A late intelligent *southern* writer, in a communication upon the value of cotton, dated New Orleans, March 10, 1839, says,—"*Planters of all countries and colonies, have ever considered it a reasonable liberty taken with their creditors, to pay at their own pleasure, provided they paid at all.*"

I do not say that this would always be the result, for when slaveholders have the money, they are generally free to pay their debts, upon the old maxim of "come light, go light." But when "times are hard," and they think "the South is ruined by a tariff," or by "a bank for the accommodation of the North," who will say they are not a little waspish?—Whereas, if the slaves were converted into freemen, and commenced business on their own account, although it should be *without capital*, so it would be *without debt*, and in most instances they might be safely trusted with small amounts in *goods*, and then, when those became due and payable, there would be no danger in going there to collect old debts and give new credits.

The value of the colored people to the citizens of the free States, does not always depend upon considerations of a pecuniary character. At present, the influence of the constitutional one-fifth, added to the slaveholding suffrage, without a corresponding or compensating equivalent to the citizens of the North, added to the incantation, the unholy charm, which through this "peculiar institution" (of the Devil) binds the South together, gives them such ascendancy in this union, that one

fiftieth part rule the other forty-nine-fiftieths, or in other words, one man controls forty-nine men, as equally entitled to rule as himself! Thus raising up an odious oligarchy, contrary to the spirit and meaning of the Federal compact.

Were the three millions of new made freemen admitted to citizenship upon as favorable terms as we admit the greatest strangers on earth, even such as "leave their country for their country's good," it would not be long before *the value of their votes* would be duly appreciated by those very demagogues who, at present, are wickedly attempting to foist themselves into office by trampling upon the rights of the colored man. It would take away from the slaveholders about seventy-five thousand votes, and add to the free suffrage about 375,000 votes, making a difference in the result of from 450,000 to half a million of votes, a number not to be overlooked or despised.

Let us pause to consider whether it is wise, fair, politic, or *right*, that one-fiftieth part should control all the rest of the white population in this or in any other respect. We of the North lose much, in a pecuniary point of view, every year, to say nothing of the humiliation and degradation attending submission to the arbitrary will of a few, and the deterioration of both colors by the unhallowed process of amalgamation. It is the infamous seraglio of the South, that is the great barrier to the abolition of slavery—like Pharaoh, they might be prevailed upon to let the *men* go, but *not the women*! !

It is not in times of *peace* alone that we should be made to feel the value of these three millions of people, who, liberated as we propose, would then have every thing to lose and nothing to gain from foreign invasion, and, consequently, would contribute their full share to the public defence.

Nor is this all. When the city in which I reside was visited by yellow fever—when pestilence and death stalked through the streets morning and evening—when terrified fathers forsook their children—children their parents—husbands their wives, and wives their husbands—(many honorable exceptions)—when at high noon our most public streets were deserted, and all was as still and sullen as midnight, save the screams of the delirious and the dying, intermingled with the rumbling of the chair-wheels [a temporary hearse] as it hastened the dead to their last homes; yet amidst all this consternation and alarm, whilst thousands of citizens were flying in terror from the doomed city, the colored people generally remained, and frequently performed the last sad duties to the sick and the dying—(without distinction as to color.) But the good deeds of Mordecai were all forgotten by the wicked Haman—"The evil that men do lives after them, the good is oft interred with their bones."

If the commerce of three millions of new made freemen be more valuable than that of one-tenth their number of slaveholders, how much more so would be their votes—their taxes—and their aid in times of contagion, invasion, or danger. Now, one-fifth of their number are represented by white men in Congress, thus conferring an aristocratical distinction between the freemen of the South and those of the North. They are either represented (or rather misrepresented) be-

cause they are *men*, or else "*chattels personal*." If as men, then why not let each man count one? If as "*chattels personal*, to all intents and purposes whatever," then why not let us be entitled to additional representatives, in virtue of our horses, our cattle, and other "*chattels personal*."

We have frequently been asked by slaveholders,—"*What can we do!* If you will only point out some way by which we can abolish slavery without ruining ourselves and our families, we will be as ready to abolish slavery as you are, but will you pay us for our property," &c. &c.

Strange as it may sound, I assuredly believe this is the easiest part of the subject under consideration. But, if we show that they *can* abolish slavery without injury to the master—the slave—or to those who hold neither of these unenviable relations, *will they do it?* try them.

Let the slaveholders, by the act of their own legislatures, or other competent authority, surrender their slaves, and their real estate, at their *present value*, to the commissioners of the county, or other suitable persons appointed by law for that purpose, and receive certificates of stock for the same, bearing a low interest. Let all the slaves be immediately emancipated, and *slavery abolished for ever!*—Then let the land be rented out in suitable portions, to be cultivated by *free labor*, (white or black,) until it can be sold in small lots, say 50 to 100 acres each, at an average price equal to cost and charges, including the value of the slaves. It is the *division* of land which makes it valuable. Take twenty thousand acres for instance, and sell it out in 100 acre lots, to 200 actual settlers, who will go to work on it with spirit, and it will immediately *increase* in *value* from fifteen to fifty per cent. The lands in such of the slave States as I am acquainted with, could *immediately* rise to that value. In fact it would be a profitable speculation to buy all the land and slaves in Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia at their present prices—set the slaves free, and for ever abolish slavery there, and then sell out the land in suitable sized farms. (The great agricultural error in this country is *farming too much land* in proportion to the means of the cultivator.) That such would be the result, compare the present value of land in Pennsylvania, and other old free States, with that of land in Delaware, Maryland and Virginia. Will any one venture to assert that the lands of the slave States are not as good as those of the free States! Compare Loudon county and the great valley of Virginia with Lancaster county and the great valley of Pennsylvania: or the low lands of Virginia, Maryland, and Delaware, poor and barren as they have become by the exhausting course of slave labor, but abounding with marl, with shells, and other manures, (so called) and compare these with the barren pine-lands of New Jersey, which the freemen of that State are now recovering from their original sterility, until it excites no surprise to see, from one to two tons of clover and timothy per acre, where formerly little else grew but Indian grass and worthless bushes. Or, with the stony ground of New England, reclaimed and ameliorated by the labor of the descendants of Pilgrim Fathers. I am bold to say, that

with *free labor*, and a proper application of "marl" (green sand,) fourteen per cent. of which is a strong alkaline substance, well adapted to the growth of clover, these lands can be made to produce as good average grass, or grain crops, as the generality of land in any other State along the sea-board.

Edmund Ruffin, a gentleman of Virginia, (who does not appear to condemn slavery *from principle*, whatever he may say of the practice,) in his essay on calcareous manures, discloses the startling secret, that slave labor is not only profitless, but *ruinous*. His authority is so unquestionable, that I will take the liberty of asking the secretary to read a couple of extracts from his interesting work. Speaking of lower Virginia, he says :

[The Secretary then read from the "Supplement to the Farmer's Register," as follows:—]

"Our condition has been so gradually growing worse, that we are either not aware of the extent of the evil, or are in a great measure reconciled by custom to profitless labor. No hope for a better state of things can be entertained until we shake off this apathy—this excess of contentment which makes no effort to avoid existing evils.

"The cultivators of eastern Virginia derive a portion of their income from a source quite distinct from their tillage—and which, though it often forces them to persist in their profitless farming, yet also, in some measure, conceals, and is generally supposed to compensate for its losses. This source of income is, *the breeding and selling of slaves*—of which, though the discussion of this point will not be undertaken here, I cannot concur in the general opinion that it is also a source of profit.

"It is not meant to convey the idea that any person undertakes, as a regular business, the breeding of slaves, with a view to their sale: but whether it is intended or not, all of us, without exception, are acting some part in aid of a general system, which, taken altogether, is precisely what I have named. No man is so *inhuman* as to *breed and raise slaves, to sell off a certain proportion regularly*, as a western drover does with his herds of cattle. But sooner or later *the general result is the same*. Sales may be made voluntarily or by the sheriff—they may be met by the first owner, or delayed until the succession of his heirs, or the *misfortune of being sold*, may fall on one parcel of slaves instead of another: but all these are but different ways of arriving at the same general and inevitable result. With plenty of wholesome, though coarse food, and under such mild treatment as our slaves usually experience, they have every inducement and facility to increase their numbers with all possible rapidity, without any opposing check, either prudential, moral, or physical. These several checks to the increase of population, operate more or less on all free persons, whether rich or poor—and slaves, situated as ours are, perhaps are placed in the only possible circumstances, in which *no restraint whatever prevents the propagation and increase of the race*.

"From the *general existence of this state of circumstances*, the particular effects may be naturally deduced: and *facts* completely accord with what those circumstances promise. A gang of slaves on a farm will often increase to four times their original number in thirty or forty years. If a farmer is only able to feed and maintain his slaves, their increase in value may double the whole of his capital originally vested in farming, before he closes the term of an ordinary life. But few farms are able to support this increasing expense, and also furnish the necessary supplies to the family of the owner. Whence *very many owners of large estates in lands and negroes*, are, throughout their lives, *too poor* to enjoy the comforts of wealth, or to encounter the expenses necessary to improve their unprofitable farming. A man so situated may be said to be a *slave to his own slaves*. If the owner is industrious and frugal, he may be able to support the increasing number of his slaves, and to bequeath them undiminished to his children. But *the income of few persons increases so fast as their slaves*. And if not, the consequence must be, that some of them *will be sold*, that the others may be supported, and the sale of more is perhaps afterwards

compelled, to pay debts incurred in striving to put off that dreadful alternative. **THE SLAVE FIRST ALMOST STARVES HIS MASTER, AND AT LAST IS EATEN BY HIM**—at least he is exchanged for his value in food. The sale of slaves is always a severe trial for their owner. Obstacles are opposed to it, not only by sentiments of humanity, and of regard for those who have passed their lives in his service—but every feeling he has of false shame comes to his aid; and such sales are generally postponed until compelled by creditors, and carried into effect by the sheriff, or by the administrator of the debtor. But when the sale finally takes place, *its magnitude makes up for all previous delays*. Do what we will, the surplus slaves *must* be sent out of a country which is not able to feed them; and these causes continue to supply the **IMMENSE NUMBERS THAT ARE ANNUALLY SOLD AND CARRIED AWAY FROM LOWER VIRGINIA**, without even producing the political benefit of lessening the actual number remaining. Nothing can check the *forced* emigration of blacks, and the voluntary emigration of whites, except increased production of food, obtained by enriching our lands, and the consequent of farming profits. No effect will more certainly follow its cause than this—that whenever our land is so improved as to produce double its present supply of food, it will also have, and will retain double its present amount of population. The improving farmer who adds one hundred bushels of corn to the previous product of his country, effectually adds also to its population, as many persons as his increase of product will feed.”

Mr. Webb then continued his remarks, as follows :

To cure these evils, which he so feelingly depicts, and so bitterly deploras, Professor Ruffin recommends spreading lime, or other alkaline substances on the land!! But a much *more effectual mode* would be to *remove the curse of slavery*: which, like an incubus upon the body politic, is destroying the energy of the *master*, as well as of the *man*—reducing *both* to pauperism.

Duty and interest require we should do what we *can*, but after all, it is probable the free people of the *South* are more nearly prepared for the immediate abolition of slavery than *we* are,—they *see*, they *feel* the evils of it, and I do sincerely believe that whenever slavery *is* abolished, the last man who will give his reluctant consent, will reside north of Mason and Dixon’s line.

✍ Out of reach of danger.

In conclusion, let me add, the present is a time for *action*—we have been talking about the abolition of slavery *long enough*—let us now *do* something that shall produce that result. We *can* do it—we *ought* to do it—then *why shall we not* do it?

You have heard how the **SLAVEHOLDERS** *could* abolish slavery *if they would*, let me tell you how **YOU**, the *freemen of the North*, can do it *if you will*.—*It need not require more than two of the free States to abolish slavery throughout the Union!*—Yes! the two States of New York and Pennsylvania can do it! without dissolving the Union! The peaceable and voluntary abolition of slavery *never will* “destroy this Union.” It is slavery! unconditional slavery, that will dis sever the nation—slavery is the box of Pandora, in which is contained all the worst evils which will ever befall this country. Had there been no slavery, there would not be this agitation about its abolition. The way for *us* to abolish the laws which uphold slavery, is as plain as the way to market:—so far as *human means can* prevail, it is COM-

LETE ORGANIZATION, and RIGHT POLITICAL ACTION, that will lead us to such a victory "as earth saw never, such as Heaven stoops down to see." It may require moral suasion and religious labor, as well as other means to prepare the ground; but the farmer who would spend *all* his time in *ploughing*, would never *sow*, much less would he ever *reap*.

The ground is *sufficiently broken*—in some places it has been ploughed "*beam deep*"—the seed has been scattered with a bountiful hand—"the fields are ripe unto harvest, but, alas! the laborers are few." Yet even *that* difficulty is about to be removed;—our youth,—our young men,—and may I not say, our young women, are ready to act, each in their appropriate sphere; already they are inviting us to lead them onward, in the great struggle for liberty.

Pennsylvania is the border State. It is **THERE** the great moral and political battle is to be fought with bloodless weapons, and lost or won! Therefore let all the friends of the slave, *every where*, aid us—sympathize with us—pray for us,—we have difficulties to contend with *there*, which many of you know not of.

All intelligent men know the political importance of Pennsylvania. If our thirty electors had *not* voted for the present incumbent, he would not now have been President. In the present *ratio* of population our influence *must be felt*, and will so continue until the tide of emigration shall transfer the balance of power into the Mississippi Valley. The glory will then have departed from Israel.

Those therefore, who can influence the votes of Pennsylvania and New York, can thus control the election and appointment of *the officers*, (and of course of the measures) of the general government! If sufficient exertion were used by the friends of freedom, in Pennsylvania, if they could be thoroughly *organized* and *aroused*—if they could be induced to awaken from the lethargy which a too near approximation to the confines of slavery is apt to produce,—if we could only be stimulated to withstand the baleful effects of the Sirocco which occasionally sweeps over us from below, the moral Simoon which enervates those whom it does not destroy,—we could cause such a peaceful, joyful revolution as would gladden the hearts of the virtuous and good throughout Christendom.

Such is the disruption of parties there, that the friends of freedom, if united and completely organized, could assume, *and maintain* the proud pre-eminence of holding the balance between those parties who are now seeking for offices, merely for their own individual personal advantage.

Slavery is a political institution—established by law—protected by law—and must be abolished by law. Political action, that shall secure the election of such men as will repeal the law which makes merchandise of men, is the only political action we desire, it is all we need, and is what we intend to have!

We humbly trust, and thankfully believe, that as a body, we do not want office or emolument. Our sole object is to "break the bands of the oppressor," and to "let the captive go free." To redeem our country from the stain which our treatment of the colored people have

brought upon us. Our opponents have *forced* us to assume the position that we will not vote for such as are opposed to our principles, and if we do not now assert our rights at the ballot box, the time is not distant when our votes as well as our petitions will not be received. Already some southern statesmen look down on the white laborers and the friends of freedom at the North, as though we were but one degree above (or below) their own slaves!

Look to it, brethren! we have duties to perform in this our day, duties to our country and to ourselves. We must *help ourselves*, if we wish *others* to help us. If it were once known and understood, that in the free states no man opposed to the abolition of slavery could obtain any office whatever, it would not be five years thereafter before the states of Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, Kentucky, Tennessee and Missouri (if not Alabama,) would all become free states, by their own voluntary legislation!

Think of what a great stake we have at issue. It is not merely to abolitionize public sentiment at the North, but to "liberate, regenerate, disincumber, disenthral," six of the largest states in this Union, from the curse of slavery! In those states, AT THIS TIME, there is a large minority who are truly and in heart as much opposed to slavery as we are, who, from prudential motives, say but little or nothing about it. But, let the spirit of freedom travel so far South as to carry all before it in Pennsylvania, and then, they will speak *openly*, what now we hardly dare whisper.

Therefore let us take decided ground, and neither vote for, support, nor encourage the election of any man, for any legislative situation whatever, who is not in favor of the immediate abolition of slavery.

Let the friends of slavery see that killing our editors, or burning our halls, will not, can not, suppress the spirit of liberty!—that abolitionists are like barometers, the heavier the pressure the higher they will rise! Then the work will be done! A majority of members favorable to liberating the slaves will be returned to Congress, and then, the most zealous man in favor of abolition will be MARTIN VAN BUREN.*

* In 1836 the whole number of votes polled for President of the United States is said to have been 1,514,053. Of these Martin Van Buren had 754,913. The opposition candidates had 759,138, (difference only 4,225, and that *against* Van Buren,) which shows how nearly balanced are the *ins* and the *outs*. The latter, at the present day, claim to be more in the majority than they were then, and are trying all they can to heal their dissensions, and concentrate on *one candidate*.

Whenever the friends of freedom shall have a number of votes sufficient to *turn the election in defiance of the votes of the South*, an avowed Anti-Slavery candidate will be nominated. Or, in other words, *our* candidate will be adopted by one or the other of the contending parties; because WE are contending for *principle*, THEY for *interest*; we for liberty for the slaves, they for the privilege of appropriating to themselves the emoluments of office. Hence, whenever we can show that our votes are sufficient to place either candidate in the presidential chair, (and that can be best shown by all of us voting for one candidate, that is to say, for an abolition candidate nominated by ourselves,) then the *office seekers* will sagely conclude "it will be better to let the poor colored people go free than to lose the election"—then will commence a desire to obtain abolition votes—each party will endeavor to outdo the other in concessions in favor of universal liberty—in the practical application of the principles of

There is one more vulnerable point whereby the friends of freedom can attack slavery, which is, to prevail upon Great Britain to prevent the importation of the products of slave labor into England and her dependencies.

the Declaration of Independence—until one party, wiser than the other, will declare for, and obtain, the *abolition of slavery*, and thus by one bold stroke of policy, one grand effort of humanity, secure not only the abolition vote, but the *colored vote* also, and thus place *their* party so completely in the ascendant that their political opponents will be completely lost for years to come, if not for ever *extinguished*—"EXPUNGED!"

Whenever the question of the liberty or slavery of the colored population shall be made the test by which parties will be divided, the majority will undoubtedly be found on the side of liberty.

| | |
|---|-----------------|
| In 1836, the free states polled | 1,058,965 votes |
| The slave states only | 455,086 |
| Majority in the free states | 603,879 |

At present the ratio is more in our favor. We will soon have a million and a half of votes, whilst the South will then only have about half a million—that is to say, we shall have three times as many voters as the South. Hence, it is nothing short of *moral cowardice* to hesitate any longer.

| | |
|---|---------------|
| In the <i>free</i> states Van Buren received | 541,201 votes |
| The opposition candidates | 517,764 |
| Van Buren's majority in the free states only . . | 23,437 |
| In the <i>slave</i> states the opposition received . . | 241,374 |
| Van Buren | 213,712 |
| Opposition majority in the slave states | 27,662 |
| Leaving Van Buren in an actual <i>minority</i> of | 4,225 |

So that a change of 11,719 votes in the free states would have left him altogether in the vocative.

Again.

| | |
|---|------------|
| Van Buren had a majority in 7 of the free states, the same in 7 of the slave states. | |
| Making for Van Buren | 14 states. |
| The opposition had a majority in 5 free states. the same in 6 slave states. | |
| Making for the opposition | 11 states. |

So (counting by states) it would *appear* as though there was a majority of *three* states in favor of Van Buren. But it only required a *change* of SIX HUNDRED AND EIGHTY-TWO votes to take the majority from *four* of the Van Buren states and give it to the opposition—(say, *on an average*, only 171 votes in each of these 4 states! In which case Van Buren would have had only 10 states, whilst the opposition would have had 15 states)—by which it may be seen *how few* can control the destinies of this country! Then, why hesitate? There are eight hundred thousand abolitionists in the United States, of whom, at least, ONE HUNDRED THOUSAND HAVE THE RIGHT TO VOTE!

What a fearful responsibility rests upon them! Let abolitionists "in the abstract," those who are in favor of political action, (in the abstract,) and those who are in favor of the *gradual mode* of emancipation, by the slow process of *moral suasion*, reflect before it be too late.

This the British nation *could do*, by such a gradual increase of duties, as should effectually drive slave produce out of their market, without sensibly diminishing the supply of the article. If slave labor be more profitable than free labor, it will bear it—if not, let it be abandoned. And at the same time it might be well to consider whether our tariff of duties on articles which compete with slave labor might not advantageously be reduced, if not altogether repealed.

Either take off the duty, or else open the South to free labor and improved machinery—then sugar and cotton may be obtained at a much cheaper rate than they are now.

The present duty on brown sugar is between forty and fifty per cent. on its original cost.

An attempt is now making to sustain the high price of cotton by prevailing upon certain monied institutions to advance more money on the cotton than it is worth.

Cotton can be raised at ten cents per pound, and yield a sufficient profit, (even by slave labor,) then how unwise to lend fifteen cents on each pound, being fifty per cent. above unavoidable cost and charges.

Let cotton fall to its real value, and, like other branches of regular business, only afford a moderate profit to persevering industry, then the price of slaves will fall at least fifty per cent., and then “our southern brethren” will be willing to talk, and to hear talk, of the abolition of slavery, and our northern manufacturers will be able to purchase the raw material for $33\frac{1}{3}$ per cent. below the present prices, which will in some measure tend to balance the decreasing duty on our manufactured articles.

Great Britain owns 1,100,000 square miles in British India, a large proportion of which is well adapted to the growth of cotton, containing an industrious free population of 120 millions of inhabitants—just eight times the number of free people in this country,—of whom 100 millions can be *hired* at 3d. per day! say for less than \$20 per annum; whereas a good slave will sell for \$1000, the interest of which is \$60 per annum, being three times the cost of free labor in India, even if the slave should never die; but *that* is a blessing of which the master cannot deprive his slave; death *will* come, and *does* come, to his relief, and ends his suffering with his life! And then the master must add the *principal* to the *interest* in calculating the cost of slave labor.

England can soon supply herself with cotton, and need not hesitate a moment in relation to laying a heavy and gradually increasing duty on slave raised cotton, until she drives it out of the market.

A new branch of industry is arising in this country, which, so far as it supersedes the use of cotton goods, will, in nearly the same proportion, supersede the use, and the abuse, of *slaves*.

Silk can be profitably produced in the *free states*; and even in the *slave states* it has been ascertained that the *Morus Multicaulis* can be more economically cultivated by *free* than by *slave* labor.

So that whether we view the subject in its political, military, civil, moral, or pecuniary aspect, or in whatever light we look at it, we arrive at this one conclusion, that slavery cannot exist much longer, provided we do our duty.

Therefore, if I have succeeded in showing that our own rights are in danger ; that the time has come when we ought to appeal to the ballot-box ; that our country is too weak to keep three millions of people in slavery ; that we are in danger of civil commotions, servile war, or foreign invasion ; that the holders of slaves are only one-fiftieth of our free population ; that two thousand millions of dollars is the enormous stake for which large masses of men are about to contend ; that the interest of the North as well as of the South will be promoted by the abolition of slavery ; that it will release the North from thralldom to the South ; that it will restore fertility and prosperity to the worn out slave states ; that the slaveholders can abolish slavery ; that the free states can do it—then may I not hope for your unanimous voice in favor of the resolutions ?

[After a few other members had spoken, the resolutions were, with much unanimity, adopted.]

NOTE.

The present pecuniary difficulties under which *the people* of this nation are now suffering, *are caused by slavery*, by the mistaken political economy of the South, where the labor of *one working man* is expected to maintain *three idlers* : it is an attempt to compel *the few* to support *the many* in idleness, which cannot be done. In Europe, with much difficulty, the many are made to support the few, causing much hardship, and must eventually be corrected.

Whether the abolitionists are right or wrong, is not *now* the question ; we have offered to discuss that point in Congress and out of Congress ; have invited others to discuss it, but the legislative halls, the churches, and public buildings generally, were closed against us, and when we erected a Hall for ourselves, it was destroyed by a mob ! therefore little or nothing more need be said upon the subject—“ *the still vote* ” is the peaceful and *effectual* remedy.

Let abolitionists remember, that seven anti-slavery members in the legislature of New York, could have sent a Friend of Liberty to the United States Senate,—that the Governor of Massachusetts has recently been elected by a majority of only one vote ! that the electoral ticket for President of the United States, in most of the States, is elected *by general ballot*, (so that every single vote is felt :) therefore, if others do not nominate suitable candidates, *let abolitionists do it* ; even if there be but one abolitionist in a county, let him nominate himself, and *vote for himself* ; this is no time for *false modesty*, we must now *act*, or it may soon be too late.

The first overt act of rebellion on the part of the slaves, will be the signal for us to prepare to withdraw from the contest, and a *general* or extensive *insurrection* would paralyse, perhaps for ever, any and every attempt on our part to effect the immediate abolition of slavery by organized action of any kind, moral, political, or religious.

Read the address of the Pennsylvania State Anti-Slavery Convention, to the colored people, in the year 1837.

The following would be a simple but efficient organization, viz.:—*A National Committee*, aided by *State, County, City, Ward, Township, and District Committees*, emanating from, corresponding with, and, to a certain extent, accountable to the said National Committee, to whom the subject of political action should be referred, with power to act. It is intended to publish the details of the plan in some of the anti-slavery papers, (probably the *Emancipator*,) or else to submit it to a future meeting of the American Anti-Slavery Society.